

Sketch

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Ed

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Ed

By Lloyd Spaulding ●

ED SHUFFLED along in his stocking feet and took his place at the breakfast table. James followed. Then the blessing poured forth in a thin, wistful voice.

"Lord Jesus, be Thou again the guest; this daily portion of food by Thee be blessed."

Ed's slight blue-clad figure, stooped by fifty years of hard toil on his farm, straightened.

"Help yourself to the sugar, James."

James did so and passed the nearly empty bowl to Ed, who carefully distributed half-a-teaspoonful on his cereal and poured on a bit of milk.

"Martha, bring the pancakes," he called to his sister in the kitchen.

"You are late this morning, Edw-a-r-d," she drawled, setting down the plate with the half dozen cakes on it.

"Yes," he said slowly in his concise, wistful syllables. "The calves broke into the hog yard last night. I was obliged to—drive them back. It took time. You did not forget to close the gate, did you, James? I found it open."

"No! I shut it jes' 'fore I came t' the house las' night." James took another pancake. "Why didn't ya holler? I'd have helped ya."

"Your job is milking, James."

JAMES TURNED the question. "What ya goin' to do today, Ed?"

"The plan is, James—go over this morning to Schultz's and bring back their mower. Take the bay team. Today is the sixth of July. Ten years ago today, Father died. We start haying tomorrow. Just as when Father died." Ed choked.

"It was all down and it threatened rain. Martha, more coffee; just a little bit."

Martha poured it sparingly. The hot pot brushed Ed's arm.

"Ouch! Ouch! Ach, that is hot! You must be more careful, Martha," he reproved in slow deliberate tones.

"Prayer meeting to-night. I will pay my share on the preacher's salary, too. James, do you have any religious observance at Ames in connection with the college?"

"Yeah, chapel once or twice a quarter! I go to church some. Then we read the Bible in English class."

"That—is—fine. There are too many to do otherwise, I suppose."

ED ATE in silence. James proceeded to empty the pancake platter and scraps resoundingly on the butter plate.

"Martha, have the cream man leave just two pounds of butter today. If we run short before the next week, you can churn. Do you hear?"

"Where d'ya want me to start mowin'?" asked James.

"I will show you when you return. Father always filed his sickle. He never used a grindstone. I shall do that. Until you return, I shall pull dock in the grove. That is a bad weed. If I didn't fight it, it would overrun the place. A place isn't worth much with noxious weeds on it. Just see! Jimmy Schmidt. He and his fine tractor. I once considered buying that place. After Father died. But not now. The bank failures have taken all my money." Ed chuckled grimly through his teeth.

All food gone, the meal was ended. Ed drained the coffee cup and soberly announced, "We will have prayer now."

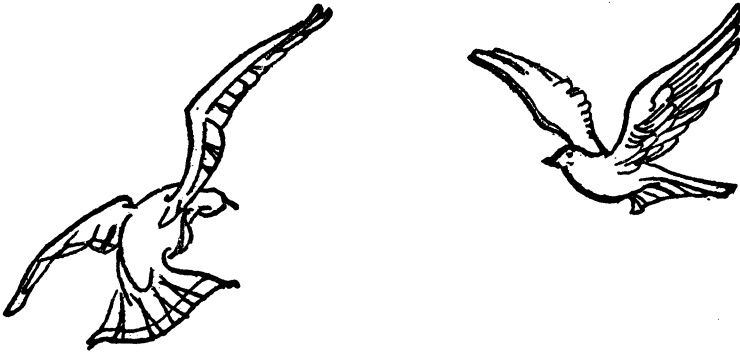
James bowed his head. Yes, same as ever. Entreating childlike, singsong came the prayer. Simple, unaffected, always the same, varied only, year in, year out by a daily shuffling of the phrases. "Our kind Heavenly Father! Our hearts look up to Thee this bright and beautiful morning,"—rain or shine. "We thank Thee for the beautiful sunshine, and the trees and grass and rain. We thank Thee for the loving care Thou hast given us, watching over us during the long night. Forgive us of our many sins." Here the clock struck six-thirty. The tempo increased. "Watch over us in the days to

come, guide us, protect us, and keep us from all harm, and finally save us. For Christ's sake. Amen."

Scratching his head, Ed shoved back his chair.

"Ed-w-a- -d, the calves are out," called Martha.

"Ach Gott!" Arising quickly, "James, go try and stop them. I will come as soon as I get my shoes on." Ed turned to search for his shoes before beginning the day's tasks.



Two Together

By Agda Gronbech

TWO CHILDREN trudge the meadow path at dusk
And reach the hill together
Hand in hand.

Two pigeons swoop beneath the barn's gray loft
And soar to touch the evening,
Wings abreast.

Two downy clouds drift onward through the night
And find the moon, high-riding,
Still together.

Two lives face dawn with eager, upward look,
With strength, and hope, and love
Alone—together.